(b) and (c) Question does not arise.

(d) IGKVV considers germplasm material to be the property of the nation, the University being a custodian of the germplasm. The rice germplasm, therefore, can not be handed over to any such organization for exclusive use. The germplasm, however, can be shared for research purpose as per the regulation in the country. The rice germplasm has also been deposited in the National Gene Bank of the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, New Delhi.

Reducing the agro-import for prosperity of rural economy

†494. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether, addressing a peasants' rally in Maharashtra he said that the Central Government would make an effort to reduce agro-import for the prosperity of local rural economy and Government are considering to provide 40 per cent of subsidy for promoting horticulture and extending the repaying period of loan given to the sugarcane growers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) In the absence of the date and place of the said peasants' rally in Maharashtra, it is not possible to comment on the statement attributed to the Agriculture Minister. However, the Government has taken a number of steps for protection of domestic farmers against increased imports, promotion of horticulture and provision of credit related relief. These include, *inter alia*:—

(i) Increase in import duties in the last five years on a number of agricultural products including cereals, edible oils, pulses, cotton, plantation crops such as tea, coffee and pepper and fruits;

(ii) A special credit related relief package has been announced by the Government on 18.6.04. The package, provides for debt restructuring by the commercial banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and cooperatives in accordance with the new guidelines of RBI/NABARD;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(iii) 25% central subsidy is provided under the Macro Management scheme to the State Government for various programmes in the horticulture sector including development of Fruits, Vegetables, Commercial Floriculture, Mushroom, Spices, Cashew, Cocoa and Medicinal and Aromatic Plants.

Legislation on cow slaughter

†495. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 585, given in the Rajya Sabha on the 25th July, 2003 and state:

(a) by when the Central legislation which is being contemplated to be enacted by Government to ban the cow slaughter, keeping in view the deep respect and feelings of the people of this country towards cow, would be introduced; and

(b) the reason for delay in introducing the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) Most States in the country have legislation banning cow slaughter as it is a State subject.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Foodgrains production

496. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the rate of growth in the production of foodgrains is progressing continously during the last three years, if so, the details thereof;

(b) the status of production of foodgrains during the last three years, year-wise;

(c) what steps Government are contemplating to take in order to give enough remunerative prices for the foodgrains during procurement; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.